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ABSTRACT

The fall of communism in eastern and central Europe inspired the call for curriculum development in citizenship education throughout the growing democratic world. Many programs between U.S. institutions and newly developing democracies continue to produce curricula for democratic citizenship suited to local needs. This digest discusses: (1) examples and outcomes of such partnerships; (2) four practical guidelines taken from these partnerships that support successful international curriculum development; and (3) resources for understanding existing programs or launching similar ones. Lists 13 references and ERIC resources. (BT)

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Gregory E. Hamot

ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, Bloomington, IN.
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.

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Developing Curriculum for Democracy through International Partnerships

By Gregory E. Hamot

The fall of communism in Eastern and Central Europe inspired the call for curriculum development in citizenship education throughout the growing democratic world. Many programs between American institutions and newly developing democracies continue to produce curricula for democratic citizenship suited to local needs. This Digest discusses (1) examples and outcomes of such partnerships, (2) four practical guidelines taken from these partnerships that support successful international curriculum development, and (3) resources for understanding existing programs or launching similar ones.

Program Outcomes. Exemplary partnership programs between U.S. institutions and educators from newly emerging democracies include the Civitas International Exchange Program conducted by the Center for Civic Education and its associates across the globe, The University of Iowa citizenship education programs in Eastern and Central Europe, The Ohio State University program with Poland, and the civic education exchange programs organized by the American Councils for International Education. Each of these programs requires the development of curricular materials for use in the home country.

The international civic education teacher programs included in these partnerships also have implications for U.S. curriculum development. For instance, the Civitas International Exchange Program produced a book of comparative lessons for democracy through a collaboration between teachers from five post-communist countries and the United States. Translations and adaptations of successful U.S. programs for civic education worldwide, such as *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution* and *Project Citizen*, also distinguish the Civitas International Exchange Program.

Efforts by the University of Iowa, The Ohio State University, and the American Councils for International Education include unique curricular materials that originate within each program and are exclusive to their partner countries. The Ohio State University program with Poland developed a curriculum for elementary students and The University of Iowa's programs with Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Armenia, Moldova, and Georgia resulted in civic education curricula for use at varying levels of compulsory education (Hamot 1999; Remy 1994). Similarly, the American Councils for International Education secured funding to help build teacher professional development programs for civic education throughout the post-communist world.

Cross-Cultural Guidelines. Four practical guidelines distinguish successful international partnerships in the development of curricula for citizenship education reform. These guidelines were constructed based on the interactions between U.S. and international participants as they worked together in both the United States and abroad (Hamot 1999). The essential similarity between these successful partnerships was the development of useable curricula for schools in the target countries. The following practical guidelines brought about these successful outcomes.

Guideline 1: *Provide a common understanding of democracy and the educational purposes implied by this understanding to form the foundation on which successful citizenship education reform programs will take place.* Each successful program required that both partners understood the shared, common elements of democracy that could work as the basis for discussion and subsequent curriculum development. By following this guideline, the partners shared common ground on which to build the content and pedagogical practices needed to support a reformed curriculum, an instrument in the process of democratization. Each partnership embraced common elements of education for citizenship in a democracy. These common elements include the knowledge, intellectual and participatory skills, and dispositions required of citizenship in a constitutional democracy (Patrick and Vontz 2001, 41).

Guideline 2: *Combine established theories on democratic citizenship education with their practical application to offer new experiences in civic learning to educators in emerging democracies.* This second guideline for successful projects pertains to the new educational experiences offered to the international partners by their U.S. counterparts and the usefulness of these experiences in attaining the objectives of curriculum reform. The activities of each partnership moved the participants from their initial conceptions of citizenship education to new understandings and applications within the American educational context. This was done by matching each international participant with a local teacher, having them attend educational conferences, and meeting with them at weekly seminars on the content and pedagogy most suitable for developing democratic citizens (Hamot 1997; Remy 1996). The possibility of going beyond the limits of the international participants' local contexts, however, led to the third guideline.

Guideline 3: *Do not exceed the boundaries of the national context for which the reformed curricula are intended.* When developing new programs in education for democracy, educators from post-communist countries must avoid possible clashes between proposed curricular reforms derived from their experience in established democracies like the United States and local educational limits in their home country. The application of a reform from an American context to the national context of a post-communist country may result in educational experiences that will not work as intended. Service learning is a case in point. This pedagogical practice, recommended by 47 U.S. state departments of education, has been viewed by education authorities in some post-communist countries as too similar to the forced public service commonly enacted under totalitarian communist regimes. Thus, its inclusion in the new civic education curricula in several of these programs had to be reconsidered.

Gregory E. Hamot is an Associate Professor of Education at the University of Iowa. **This Digest is based on chapter 7 of *Civic Learning in Teacher Education*. Bloomington, IN: ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, 2003.**

Guideline 4: *Design and carry out a systematic formative evaluation of the new curriculum to monitor its cultural adaptability and effectiveness.* The U.S. directors of the successful programs noted above traveled to the developing democracies to meet with ministry officials, members of leading non-governmental educational organizations, pedagogical scholars, and teachers. Participants in these meetings set objectives for each partnership. These objectives varied from program to program due to the differences in each country's new democratic context. However, these predetermined objectives offered criteria for formative evaluation of the curricular outcomes of each program. These objectives offered benchmarks for determining whether or not each reformed curriculum achieved its educational purposes in its intended national setting. Constant monitoring of the curriculum development process as well as rigorous field-testing of the products worked to secure curricular suitability for these transitional democracies. An example of this guideline in practice is the particularly well developed evaluation of *Project Citizen* as adapted for the Latvian and Lithuanian contexts and conducted by the Social Studies Development Center at Indiana University during its participation in the Civitas International Exchange Program (Vontz, Metcalf, and Patrick 2000).

Internet Resources. The following Web sites contain examples of a curriculum for civic education developed through international partnerships.

Civnet <www.civnet.org> is the Civitas International Web site. It details the many programs conducted by the Center for Civic Education under its Civitas Exchange Program.

Education for Democracy/International: A Project of the Educational Foundation of the American Federation of Teachers <www.aft.org/international/EDI/index.html> began in 1989 with the goal of promoting teacher training and curriculum development, democratic skills and leadership training, and publications on democracy and education worldwide.

The Partners in Education (PiE) Program of the American Councils for International Education <www.americancouncils.org/program.asp?PageID=83&ProgramID=10> brings together post-communist educators with U.S. institutions to learn about citizenship education and to observe and contribute to academic life at the host institutions. Participants are expected to provide a training conference in civics curriculum development and evaluation upon their return home.

References and ERIC Resources. The following list of resources includes references used to prepare this Digest. The items followed by an ED number are available in microfiche, paper, or electronic full-text from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). For information about prices, contact EDRS, 7420 Fullerton Road, Suite 110, Springfield, Virginia 22153-2852; World Wide Web <edrs.com>; telephone numbers are (703) 440-1400 and (800) 443-3742. Entries followed by an EJ number, annotated monthly in CURRENT INDEX TO JOURNALS IN EDUCATION (CIJE), are not available through EDRS. However, they can be located in the journal section of most larger libraries by using the bibliographic information provided, requested through Interlibrary Loan, or ordered from commercial reprint services.

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